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SUBJECT: CYPRUS SUPPORTS BANNING IMPORTS OF BURMESE GEMS
AND HARDWOODS

REF: SECSTATE 5276

11. Per reftel, PolOff demarched Republic of Cyprus MFA Asia Desk Officer Nikos Panayi on January 25. Panayi responded that the European Union had a "high interest" in the situation in Burma, as demonstrated by the November 2007 appointment of Italian MP Piero Fassino as EU Special Envoy to Burma. Regarding broader UN efforts, Panayi asserted that Cyprus supports envoy Ibrahim Gambari and his good offices mission, believing it is important to maintain international pressure, including "smart sanctions," on Burma. Cyprus hopes that Gambari's next visit will produce tangible results and the release of Aung San Suu Kyi. With regards to the EU sanctions approved in October 2007, Panayi reported that the EU is still in the process of finalizing implementation. Cyprus approves of "humane, focused" sanctions, and will follow EU consensus on any future prohibition of gem and/or hardwood imports from Burma.

12. Panayi confirmed that Burma would be discussed at the next GAERC meeting, and requested the names of the three state-owned Burmese banks that handle foreign exchange transactions. He also expressed the hope that ASEAN would be more "energetic" in helping to resolve the Burma issue.
SCHLICHER